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In a landslide, UW-Eau Claire faculty vote “Union Yes!”

Eau Claire, Wis. – Earlier today, faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire voted 233-87 in a unit of 368 in favor of union representation through AFT-Wisconsin, a statewide labor federation representing professional public employees.

UW-Eau Claire faculty join their colleagues at UW-Superior, who voted overwhelmingly in favor of collective bargaining last week. The two campuses are the first to form collective bargaining unions since their right to do so was established under the 2009-2011 state budget.

According to Bryan Kennedy, president of AFT-Wisconsin, faculty unions in the UW System have been decades in the making. “The UW-Eau Claire and UW-Superior elections are the culmination of a forty-year campaign to extend collective bargaining rights to UW academic staff and faculty,” stated Kennedy. “Academic professionals throughout the UW System who have led this campaign are no doubt reflecting on these elections with a great sense of pride.”

UW-Eau Claire English Professor Stephanie Turner believes that the implications of today’s election are far reaching. “Today my faculty colleagues sent a strong message not just on collective bargaining, but on our place in the university,” stated Turner. “There is no question that, along with academic staff, faculty are the stewards of the campus community. Now, for the first time, we will be able to advocate for the betterment of that community through collective bargaining.”

Turner states that issues faculty may address in their first set of negotiations directly affect the students of UW-Eau Claire. “One major issue that affects all UWEC faculty is our ever-increasing workload. When we are able to address this issue through collective bargaining, we can ensure that each of our students gets the individual attention that they need not just to graduate, but to thrive.”

Contract negotiations are expected to begin soon. UW-Eau Claire academic staff continue to explore the possibility of forming a collective bargaining union.

Kennedy indicates that organizing drives continue on campuses throughout the UW System. “AFT-Wisconsin’s academic staff and faculty activists have been organizing around the issue of collective bargaining rights for the past forty years. We look forward to continuing to work with UW faculty and academic staff in helping them to establish a meaningful voice on campus.”

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